

CLEANSING—WRONG OR RIGHT?

NO. 3069

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*“If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean;
yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.”
Job 9:30-31*

[Another sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on the same text is #1908, Washed to Greater Foulness]

WE are all, by nature and by practice, unclean in the sight of God. However excellent or virtuous we may seem before men, we have all broken God's law, for that law requires perfection and we have been far from it. The law demands spotless holiness towards God, and perfect rectitude towards man, and in some point or other we have all transgressed that law—and we have therefore become polluted before the thrice-holy JEHOVAH. The great question which ought to arise in the mind of every one of us is this—“How can I be cleansed before God?”

I. We are called upon to remember, first, that TO BE CLEAN IN THE SIGHT OF GOD IS WORTH EVERY POSSIBLE EFFORT.

Job speaks of washing himself with snow water and trying to make himself clean. And this he speaks of right earnestly. However far from the hot plains in which he lived, Job might have to send for snowy water—whatever quantity of soap (for in the Hebrew there is an allusion to soap in the second clause)—however much nitre and soap he might have to take in order to wash himself perfectly clean, it was worth all the expense and trouble if only it could be accomplished.

And dear friends, we must be clean in the sight of God. We must want to be clean in the sight of God, for, *if not, we are the objects of His continual displeasure*. “God is angry with the wicked every day.” This is a solemn truth which is far too much forgotten in the present day. Many have tried to put the thought of it right on one side and held forth only the doctrine of the divine benevolence.

But while that doctrine is blessedly true, these solemn declarations are equally true, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” And “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” Now, if we were right-hearted towards God, this would seem to us to be a very dreadful thing. We little know how exceedingly hateful sin is to God. [See sermon #3068, Untold Depths and Heights]

You know that there are some things, which you and I sometimes see, which are very disgusting and loathsome to us. I went once into a railway station in Italy, where I saw a man who had lost his arm, and who, by way of begging exposed to us the stump of it, and also a horrible ulcer from which he was suffering. I turned away sick at the sight and dreaded to go to that station again, for fear that I should be met, inside the door of the waiting room, by that horrible spectacle.

But depend upon it, no mutilation and no disease of man's body was ever so sickening to the most delicate taste as sin is sickening to God. He loves purity and therefore He must loathe impurity. He delights in those who are just, and true, and upright, and He cannot endure those who are unjust, false, or unrighteous. His holy soul abhors them as that strong expression of His in the prophecy of Zechariah proves—“My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.”

The sinner does not dislike God more than God dislikes him, as a sinner. The sinless God cannot look with complacency upon him who is sinful—he is loathsome to the holy mind of God. So, surely, if

we are right-hearted, we shall feel that anything and everything that we can do, in order to get right with God, and to become clean in His sight, we ought to do at once.

Let us also remember that, *as long as we are unclean, we are in daily danger of the fires of hell.* Do any of you know what hell is? It is the leper colony of the universe. Just as, in the olden times, when the “black pest,” or some other terrible epidemic ran through a town or village, they would build a house some miles away from the place and call it the pest house, where they would put away all those who had the pest or plague—such is hell, only a million times worse than any earthly pest house ever was.

Hell is the pest house of the moral universe. You know that, in countries where leprosy prevails, they shut up the lepers in a place by themselves, lest the terrible disease should pollute the whole district. And hell is God’s leper colony, where sinners must be confined forever when they are incurable and past hope.

And what are the pains of hell? They are the natural result of sin. Sin is the mother of hell. The pains and groans of lost spirits in hell are simply the fully-developed flowers of which their sins were the seed. Bitter is the fruit, sour is the vintage of that vine of Sodom and Gomorrah which some men set themselves so diligently to plant—and so industriously to water.

Sin bears its own sting within itself. The torments that are to come are the stings of conscience, and the inevitable effects of remorse upon the soul and body of the man who will continue to be unclean in the sight of God. Lest, therefore, any of you should ever be shut up in that place of “everlasting destruction from the presence of the LORD and from the glory of his power,” I do beseech you to arouse yourselves and diligently seek to find out how you may be made clean in God’s sight.

*“Ye sinners, seek His grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of His cross,
And find salvation there.*

*So shall that curse remove,
By which the Savior bled;
And the last awful day shall pour
His blessings on your head.”*

In addition to the eternal loss which all who are cast into hell must sustain, be it also remembered that *none can enter heaven until they are pure.* Those holy gates are so closely guarded by angelic watchers that no contraband of sin shall ever cross the frontiers of heaven. The angels look up and down and through and through, the man who presents himself there—and if so much as a speck, or spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing is found upon him, he cannot be allowed to enter.

Just think for a minute how utterly impossible it must be for the impure to enter the courts of the thrice-holy God. You sometimes see, in the streets of London, wretched creatures in whom poverty, and drunkenness, and debauchery have so combined that even in their outward appearance, they present a truly horrible aspect. They are so foul, and filthy, and loathsome that I should not dare to describe them more fully. None of us would like to come near them—our flesh creeps at the very thought of them.

Now, suppose that these shoeless, ragged, filthy, diseased creatures should present themselves at the gates of Buckingham Palace on some great occasion when all the princes of the blood and the peers of the realm were gathered there. Do even the most democratic of you think that the soldiers would be too squeamish if they were to tell them that they were unfit to enter such a place and to mingle with such company? “Why, no,” you say, “of course, they must at least be clean, or they can never enter the royal palace.”

Well then, it must assuredly be so in a still more emphatic sense, with regard to the palace of the King of kings. Would it be possible for any to enter there defiled with sin, foul with fornications, adulteries, thefts, murders, infidelities, blasphemies, profanities, and rebellions against God? It cannot be

that the pure air of heaven should ever be breathed by them, for it is expressly declared that “there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.”

All who are there are absolutely perfect. And you and I, if we would be with them, must be renewed in heart and converted unto God, and washed from every stain, and spot, and speck of sin. It is clearly impossible that the thrice-holy God should have unrenewed, uncleansed sinners immediately under His own eyes, in His own courts. It is bad enough for Him to have them, for a time, in this little planet, floating in the vast sea of space. But He could not endure to have them up there amid the splendors of eternal glory. That cannot, must not, and will not be.

Once more, *every man will feel that it is worth his while to endeavor to be clean before God if he wants a quiet conscience*, for a truly quiet conscience is never possessed by any man until he has been washed in the precious blood of Jesus, and so made “whiter than snow.” Does anyone ask, “Can that be done?” I answer in God’s own words, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

This great miracle of mercy can be wrought and nobody’s conscience will ever be perfectly at peace till it is accomplished. There is a way of silencing conscience without that miracle being wrought, but it is like the way in which cruel tyrants sometimes silenced the martyrs. “Hold your tongue,” the tyrant has said, “I will not listen to your heresy.” But the brave man has still gone on speaking—he would not be silenced. And then the tyrant has cut his tongue out.

I think I have known men cut out the tongue of their conscience, so that it could no longer speak. Perhaps some here have done it—torn it right out by the roots, by going to the drink shop, by frequenting evil company, by taking up infidel ideas, when they knew better. They knew that they could not, with a clear conscience, do what they wanted to do, so they resolved that they would tear out its tongue, so that it could no longer rebuke them.

O foolish man, you could not have done a worse thing for yourself than that, for he who quiets his conscience after that fashion is like one of whom I have heard who, one night, was unable to sleep because a faithful dog kept on howling under his window. He called out to it and bade it lie down, and went back to bed and tried to sleep, but still the howling continued. And at last, when the creature would not be quiet, he took his gun and shot it in his anger.

He ought to have known that the dog wanted to tell him that there were burglars who were trying to enter his house and that the faithful animal was doing its best to preserve its master’s life. After the dog was dead, and the man had gone to sleep again, the burglars entered his bedroom, stole everything of value that they could find, and ended by staining their hands with the blood of the foolish man who had killed the poor creature that warned him of his peril.

The devil is trying to destroy your soul, and your conscience, like that faithful dog, gives the alarm, but you cry to it, “Lie down!” It does not lie down, however, and perhaps this very sermon is helping to wake it up, but you are determined that it shall be quiet and you will even kill it if you can. Well, if you do, you will then have sealed your own destiny by that very deed.

The only proper way of quieting conscience is the method that a wise owner would have taken of quieting his dog. Supposing that man had gone downstairs and patted his dog on the head and praised it for being a good dog? Suppose that he had loosed its chain and taken it round the yard with him? Suppose, too, that he had taken that gun, with which he so foolishly killed his dog, and when, at last, he had discovered the villains who had come to rob him, he had set his dog on them, or even leveled his gun at them? That would have been far wiser than killing his dog and losing his own life.

In such a fashion as that, go and lose your conscience, and let your sins be destroyed—otherwise they will assuredly destroy you. The quieting of an awakened conscience can only be rightly done by getting rid of sin—and to get rid of sin there is but one way—of which I will speak before I have finished my discourse.

Thus much on the first point—to be clean in the sight of God is worth any and every effort.

II. Now secondly, ALL EFFORTS OF OUR OWN, MADE IN OUR OWN WAY, WILL CERTAINLY FAIL.

It is very curious what efforts people will make to get rid of their sins. *Some try to get clean by ceremonies.* Ah, Mr. Priest, is that good soap that you are bringing with your bowl of water? “Yes,” he replies, “the best Roman soap, or you can have a cake from Canterbury or Oxford if you would prefer it. How beautifully white your hands will look if you only use enough of this patent soap.”

So you say, but if you had your eyes opened, you would see that after all your washing, they are as black as night. The soapsuds get in your eyes, sir, and therefore you do not see the dirt that is still on the sinner’s hands. That is all that ever comes of mere ceremonies—they blind, but they do not cleanse.

Another thinks that he can obtain cleansing by religious observances. His form of washing with snow water is attendance at his usual place of worship. He goes there regularly, he would never be away if he can help it, when the proper time for service comes. And having done that, he asks, “Will not that take away my sin?” No, sir, not a spot, nor even half a spot.

Some have given away large sums of money with the hope of thereby cleansing themselves from sin. But all the gold in the world can never form a golden ointment with which to cleanse iniquity. There are many who have tried to get cleansing by their moralities and their charities, but their efforts have all been in vain. Mr. Legality and Mr. Civility are said to be great hands at washing blackamoors white, but I have very grave doubts as to whether the blackamoors are not blacker after the washing than they were before.

Men have had the strangest notions as to how they might be cleansed from sin. Read John Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*—which is, as you know, a record of his own experience—and you will see some very curious ideas of his concerning the way in which he hoped to wash himself from sin. Yet, his ideas are not any more curious than those of people who are now living.

The other day I read a letter from a young farm laborer, describing the way in which, at one time, he hoped to get saved. He said that in the village where he lived, there were some young men who went to the Patagonian Mission, and there got what he called, “massacreated.” Of course, he meant to say that they were massacred.

And he further wrote, “I thought that, if the Patagonian Mission would have taken me, and the natives would only have killed me, joyfully and gladly would I have gone, for I heard that they were all saints who died in that way, and I would willingly have gone if I could have got to heaven by that method.” Yes, and so would I, and so would most of us when we were under the burden of sin. We would not have minded being killed and eaten if we might, in that way, have entered into eternal life, for a man who really feels the burden of sin is willing to try all sorts of extraordinary methods of getting rid of it.

Look at the methods adopted by the heathen in order, as they hope, to get rid of sin. Go to India and look at the great car of Juggernaut, and see by what cruel means the people there hope to get rid of sin. And there are many other equally useless methods which the spiritual quacks are vainly puffing as unfailing ways of getting rid of sin.

But on the authority of the Word of God, we confidently declare that all human methods of seeking the cleansing of sin, which men may practice, must end in failure, even as Job’s did when he said, “If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.” Yet, if God really means to save you, He will never let you be satisfied with any human plan of salvation, but He will, to use Job’s expression, plunge you in the ditch and make you feel even blacker than you did before. How will He do that?

Sometimes the Lord does this *by bringing to a man’s memory his old sins.* “There,” says the self-satisfied man, “I am getting on now—how clean I am after that last wash!” And just then he recollects some sin he committed as a boy, or some foul deed which he can never wipe completely off the tablet of his memory. “Oh,” he cries, “that dreadful past sin of mine has not gone, as I vainly hoped that it had—it is still there.” So he is again plunged in the ditch and all his beautiful washing counts for nothing.

At another time, *the Lord permits the man to be greatly tempted*. He gets up in the morning and says to himself, “Now I really feel a great deal better than I have felt for a long time. I have firmly resolved to make a man of myself and I know that my resolutions are much stronger than they used to be.” So he starts out very confidently. But presently there comes to him something that is stronger than his resolutions—and over goes the boastful man, generally failing in the very thing in which he fancied himself to be strongest. He soon discovers that he was only powerful as long as he had not a powerful adversary to contend with him. That is the way in which many a man has been plunged by God in the ditch.

Sometimes God will do it in another way—*by opening a boastful man’s eyes to see the imperfection of his work*. He thinks, “I did that piece of work well. I am sure I did and I do not see how any Christian could do it better.” When any man begins to talk like that, the Lord often makes him sit down and closely examine that work of which he is so proud. And as he looks at it, he sees that it is full of flaws. It is a beautiful vase, but just try to fill it with water. Ah, it leaks! The man looks at it and says, “Well, I never thought it was as faulty as this. It seemed to me to be perfect. Yet this beautiful vase that appeared to be so fair, leaks like a sieve.”

The man says to himself, “That good action of mine was done with a bad motive, so it is like a leaky vessel. While I was doing it, I was as proud as Lucifer over it, so it leaks—and after I had done it, I went away and boasted about it, so the vase kept on leaking.” In that way the man gets plunged into the ditch again and he sees himself to be blacker than he was before he had thus washed his hands with snow water.

Very frequently, men have been plunged into the ditch *by being made to see the spirituality of the law*. A man says, “I have not broken the law. I have kept all the commandments from my youth up. I never killed anybody. No one can say that I ever did.” But where he finds it written, “Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer,” he cries, “Ah, then, I have been a murderer!”

A man says very boldly, “I have never committed adultery. Who dares to say that I have?” But when he reads the words of Jesus, “I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart,” then the man says, “I must own that I am guilty, for I see that I have broken these commandments, by my thoughts and looks, although I knew that I had not broken them by my actions. I did not know that the law concerned itself so closely with looks and thoughts as well as with acts and words.”

But indeed, that is the very thing with which the law is concerned and for which it condemns men. And when the self-satisfied man learns this solemn truth, he says, “Then I am plunged in the ditch, and my own clothes abhor me, although I had washed myself quite clean.”

Others are plunged in the ditch in this way—*they are made to realize the supreme holiness of God*. It had been the habit of a certain man to say, “I am as good as my neighbors, and better than most of them. Don’t talk to me about Christian men and women—there’s many a professing Christian not half as good as I am. Why, was I not kind to my neighbor when he was in distress? Did I not give a guinea to such-and-such a charity? Am I not ready at all times to stand up for the right?” So he talks.

But when he gets a view of God, then, like Job, he abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes. And he says, “I thought I could compare myself with man, but I cannot compare myself with God. And as God, and not man, is the standard of holiness, I am indeed plunged in the ditch. Yet I thought I had washed myself perfectly clean—that snow water and patent soap did seem to take the dirt off beautifully—but now I find that, in the sight of God, I am just as filthy as I can be.”

And when the Lord, the Holy Spirit, convinces a man of sin, the words of Job are none too strong—“Mine own clothes shall abhor me.” You may sometimes have abhorred your clothes because they were so dirty that you were ashamed to be seen in them. But you must be dirty indeed when your very clothes seem ashamed to hang upon you. This is what the convicted sinner feels—that he is so foul that his very clothes seem to be ashamed of him, as if they would rather have been on anybody else’s back than on the back of such a filthy sinner as he is.

“Ah,” says someone, “you are exaggerating now.” No, I am not exaggerating, at least as far as mine own personal experience is concerned. I can well remember—though I did not then know that John Bunyan had used somewhat similar expressions—I can well remember when I was under deep conviction of sin, wishing that I had been a frog or a toad rather than have been a human being, because I felt myself to be so foul in the sight of God.

I felt that I was such a great sinner that the bread I ate might justly choke me and that the air I breathed might have righteously refused to give life to the lungs of such a sinner as I was. I felt, at that time, that if God spared me, it was only because He was boundless in compassion—and if He cast me into the hottest hell, I could never murmur against the justice of His sentence, for I felt that I deserved any punishment that He might award me.

When the Holy Spirit brings sinners to feel like this, it is a proof that He is leading them on the way by which He brings them to Christ. Oh, that the Lord would make every guilty sinner here long to be clean in His sight, and also make each one feel what is certainly the truth—that all the means, in a man’s own power, of making himself clean will turn out to be dead failures—for, though he should take snow water and wash himself never so clean, yet would he again be plunged in the ditch and his own clothes would abhor him.

III. The last point on which I have to speak is the best. It is this—THERE IS A RIGHT WAY OF GETTING CLEAN IN GOD’S SIGHT.

First, *it is an effective way*. He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be made clean. He shall be cleansed from all the foulness of the past—God will wipe it right out. He shall be cleansed as to his heart and his nature. To him God repeats that ancient promise, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” “How is this to be had?” By trusting to the divine method of cleansing the filthy, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses from all sin everyone who believes in Him.

There are millions upon the earth now whom the blood of Jesus Christ has completely cleansed—and there are millions more, now hymning His praises in glory, who have had every spot of sin taken out of them by the application of His precious blood.

O sinful souls, if you could ever have made yourselves clean, Christ would not have needed to pour out His life’s blood that you might be washed in it! If the cleansing bath could have been filled with human tears, or could have been filled by means of the incantations of a so-called priest, there would have been no need for Your wounds, O Emmanuel, and no need of Your indwelling, O regenerating and sanctifying Spirit! But because we could not be cleansed by any other means, the water and the blood flowed freely from the pierced heart of Jesus, the Divine Son of God. And now the ever-blessed Spirit waits to be gracious, and to change the heart, and renew the nature, and make us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

This effective way of getting cleansed is also *an immediate way*. We have often sung,—

*“There is life for a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment for thee;”—*

and it is true, for there is instant cleansing for anyone who looks to Jesus Christ. A sinner may have committed more sins than he could count in a million years, and yet, as soon as he gives one believing look at Jesus Christ, all those sins are gone forever.

You know that when a bill is paid, the receipt is written at the bottom and that puts an end to the whole debt. So, Sinner, the name of Jesus at the bottom of the whole roll of your indebtedness to God puts an end to it all. The man who thinks he has only a few sins may bring his little bill—and you who know that you have many sins may bring your big bill—but Christ’s receipt avails for one as much as the other. Even if the roll of your guilt should be many miles long, it makes no difference to the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. If the list of your sins should be long enough to go right around the world—and

just one drop of the blood of Jesus should be put upon it—all that is written there would at once disappear and be gone forever, and the sinner would be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

Further, this effective and immediate way of cleansing is also an *attainable way of cleansing*. To preach to sinners a salvation which they cannot obtain would be to tantalize them. We do not so, but to every person in this Tabernacle tonight and to everyone anywhere else whom this message may reach, we have to say this, “If you will confess your sin to God and then put your trust in Jesus Christ, His Son, you shall be saved—even you, whosoever you are, and whatever sin you may have committed.”

Your confession is to be made, not to your fellow creature, but to Him against whom your sin was committed. Go to your home or seek some quiet spot where you can commune with your God. Tell Him that you have sinned and ask Him to have mercy upon you. Tell Him that Jesus died in the place of sinners—plead the merit of His precious blood and say, “Lord, I believe that You can save me and I trust in You to save me, for Jesus’ sake.” If you will do this, you shall be forgiven. You shall be renewed in heart, you shall be made clean.

In closing my discourse, I remind you, as I have often done before, that *this cleansing is available now*, at this very moment. I recollect hearing of a somewhat stingy man who once wanted to hire a horse and chaise to go out for a drive, so he went to the man who let such things and asked the price. He said that the sum asked was too high—and went round to every other person in the little town, who had such things to let, but found that their prices were higher still.

So, at last, he went back to the first man and said to him, “I will take your horse and chaise at the price you mentioned.” “No,” said he, “you won’t, for you have been around to everybody else to try to get them at a lower price, and I shall not let you have mine now.” I was not very much surprised to hear that he was told that.

Now, some of you have been to everybody else for salvation except to the Lord Jesus Christ. You have been to Rome, and you have been to Oxford, and you have been to self, and I hardly know where you have not been. Yet, notwithstanding that, you may come to Christ even now. He will not refuse you even now. Going to Canterbury has not saved you, but going to Calvary can. You have found no help in the city on the seven hills, but you may find immediate help on the little hill outside Jerusalem’s gate—the little mound called Calvary, whereon the Savior shed His precious blood for all who will put their trust in Him.

I have been talking to you in a very simple, homely way, for I have been afraid lest anybody should by any possibility not know what the Gospel really is. I always think that, if my net has small meshes, the big fish can get in and the little fish cannot get out, So I have put small meshes to my net and talked in a homely style with simple illustrations which all can understand. The Lord knows that I have done this out of love to your souls.

I would bring you all to Jesus if I could—but I cannot do that. Oh, that the Spirit of God would do it now! Why do you need so much urging to come to Christ? You are filthy with sin and here is a free bath in which you may be washed spotlessly white. Come and bathe in Jesu’s blood and that will make you fairer than the lilies, and lovelier than all the glories of Solomon.

If you do but wash in this fountain, you will scarcely know yourself when you come up out of it. And if you happen to meet your old self, the next day, you will say, “Ah, self! I don’t want to be on speaking terms with you now. I never knew that you were so ugly, I never knew that you were so filthy, I never knew that you were so abominable, till I had gotten rid of you by being made a new creature in Christ Jesus.”

The Lord bless you and bring you to trust in Jesus Christ, His Son, and He shall have all the praise and glory forever and forever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 5:13-26

Verse 13. *Ye are the salt of the earth:*

The earth would go putrid if there were no salt of grace to preserve it. So, dear friends, if God's grace is in you, there is a pungent savor about you which tends to preserve others from going as far into sin as otherwise they would have done. "Ye are the salt of the earth."

13. *But if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?*

If the God-given grace could be taken from you altogether, if you had no sanctifying power about you at all, what could be done with you? You would be like salt that has lost its savour.

13. *It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

Mark this, then, either the saints must persevere to the end, or else the grace of God has done nothing for them effectually. If they do not continue to be saints and to exercise a saintly influence, there is no hope for them. There cannot be two new births for the same person. If the divine work has failed once, it will never be begun again. If they have really been saved, if they have been made the children of God, and if it be possible for them to lose the grace which they have received, they can never have it again. The Word of God is very emphatic upon that point—"If they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance" Falling may be retrieved, but falling away never can be. [See Sermon #75, Volume 2—FINAL PERSEVERANCE]

There are countries where there is found salt from which the pungency has completely gone. It is an altogether useless article, and if there are men who ever did possess the grace of God, and who were truly God's people, if the divine life could go out of them, they would be in an utterly hopeless case. Perhaps there are no powers of evil in the world greater than apostate churches—who can calculate the influence for evil that the Church of Rome exercises in the world today?

14. *Ye the are light of the world.*

The Bible is not the light of the world, it is the light of the church. But the world does not read the Bible, the world reads Christians. "Ye are the light of the world."

14. *A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

You Christians are like a city built upon a hilltop—you must be seen. As you will be seen, mind that you are worth seeing.

15. *Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

God's intent is, first, to light you. And secondly, to put you in a conspicuous position, where men can see you.

16. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Let the light of your purity and your good works be as bright as possible, yet let not the light be to your own praise and glory, but let it be clearly seen that your good works are the result of sovereign grace, for which all the glory must be given to "your Father which is in heaven."

17-18. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

See how the great Lord of the New Testament confirms the Old Testament? He has not come to set up a destructive criticism that will tear in pieces the Book of Deuteronomy, or cut out the very heart of the Psalms, or grind Ezekiel to powder between His own wheels. But Christ has come to establish yet more firmly than before all that was written aforetime and to make it stand fast as the everlasting hills.

19. *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

A true man may make mistakes and so he may teach men to violate some one or other of the divine commandments. If he does so, he shall not perish, for he was honest in his blunder. But he shall be

among the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he, who earnestly, perseveringly, and conscientiously teaches all that he knows of the divine will, “the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

20. *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Christ does not teach a lower kind of morality than the Pharisees taught. They were very particular about little things—jots and tittles—but we must go further than they went. We must have more righteousness of life than they had, although they seemed to their fellow men to be excessively precise. Christ aims at perfect purity in His people and we must aim at it too, and we must really attain to more holiness than the best outward morals can produce.

21. *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:*

God had said, “Thou shalt not kill.” But the remainder of the verse was the gloss of the Rabbis—a true one, yet one that very much diminishes the force of the divine command.

22. *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment;*

And a far higher judgment than that of men;

22. *And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca,—*

A word of very uncertain meaning, a kind of snubbing word, a word of contempt which men used to say to one another, meaning that there was nothing in them, “Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca,—”

22. *Shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Christ will not have us treat men with anger, or with contempt, which is a very evil form of hate, akin to murder, because we as good as say, “That man is nobody.” That is, we make nothing of him, which is morally to kill him. We must not treat our fellow men with contempt and derision, nor indulge any angry temper against them, for anger is of the devil, but “love is of God.”

23-24. *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

Note that this injunction is addressed to the man who has offended against his brother. Why is this? Because he is the least likely to try to make up the quarrel. It is the man who has been offended who usually exhibits the nobler spirit, but the offender is almost always the last to seek a reconciliation and therefore the Savior says to him, “If your brother has anything against you, it is but right that you should be the first to seek reconciliation with him. Leave your gift, go away from the prayer meeting, turn back from the Lord’s table, and go and first be reconciled to your brother.”

25. *Agree with thine adversary quickly,—*

Always be ready to make peace—not peace at any price—but still, peace at any price except the sacrifice of righteousness.

25-26. *Whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

And there are some debts of which we cannot pay the uttermost farthing. And there is a prison out of which no man shall come, for the uttermost farthing demanded there shall never be paid. God grant that we may none of us ever know what it is to be shut up in that dreadful dungeon!

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